

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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WOMEN IN COMBAT: IS THE CURRENT POLICY OBSOLETE?

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

23 February 2007

Distribution A: Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE 23 FEB 2007		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2007 to 00-00-2007	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Women in Combat: Is the Current Policy Obsolete?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air University,Air Command and Staff College,225 Chennault Circle,Maxwell AFB ,AL,36112				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 70	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In January 2005, during an interview with the Washington Times on the war in Iraq and Army transformation, President Bush stated: “There’s no change of policy as far as I’m concerned. No women in combat.”¹ Technically, the policy has not changed, but in reality, the nation’s policy has not survived contact with the enemy. As Commander in Chief, the President has engaged military power in the war against terrorism on a global scale and the counterinsurgency in Iraq has engulfed both men and women in combat.

Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (Afghanistan) and IRAQI FREEDOM (Iraq) are the first major combat operations since hundreds of thousands of new positions in the military were opened to women in the 1990s. Women deployed and fought as fighter, bomber, attack, and helicopter pilots in all the services, in ground combat support positions, and aboard combat and support Navy and Coast Guard vessels. According to the Department of Defense, (DoD) 10,100 women were deployed to Iraq in May 2006, and 1,900 women were deployed to Afghanistan, constituting 8 percent of the total force.² In total, over 155,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2002.³

¹ Rowan Scarborough and Joseph Curl, “Despite pressure, Bush vows ‘no women in combat,’” *Washington Times*, 12 January 2005, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/functions/print.php?storyID=20050111-101005-5277r> (accessed 19 October 2006).

² Joint Staff Information Paper on Women in Combat, dated 3 May 2006. Obtained from JCS/J1.

³ Sharon Cohen, “Women Take on Major Battlefield Roles,” *ABC News*, 2 December 2006, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=2695699> (accessed 20 February 2006).

American women have served in the military in every war the U.S. has fought beginning with the Revolutionary War. Today, there are over 198,000 women in the active duty military, constituting 14.5 percent of the active force.⁴ As integral members of the Armed Forces, women are here to stay as Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines. Despite women's accomplishments throughout history and most recently in the War on Terror, DoD policy still restricts women from serving in approximately 200,000 positions in the military.⁵

In this article, I will answer the question: "Should women continue to be prohibited from serving in 'ground combat' units based only on their gender?" The answer I provide begins by placing today's policy into context, summarizing the major laws and policies related to women in the military, and reviewing the history of the expanding roles of women in the military. I then analyze the ground combat exclusion policy and discuss some of the gender-related policies in the DoD that, in my opinion, hinder the full integration of women into the military as respected warfighters. Finally, I provide some policy and legislative recommendations to further increase America's military effectiveness.

I had the privilege of being one of the first women to become a fighter pilot in the United States Air Force (USAF) and the first woman in U.S. history to fly a fighter aircraft into combat. In June 2006, I completed a tour as the first woman to command a combat aviation squadron, during which I led my A-10 fighter squadron into combat in Afghanistan in 2005.⁶ My assignment as a female front-line warrior and the highest-ranking female combat pilot in the USAF enables me to view this issue from both an experiential and leadership perspective. My

⁴ Joint Staff Information Paper. The percent deployed to the combat zone is less than the percent in the total force primarily because of high deployment rate of the types of positions closed to women especially in the Army and Marines.

⁵ United States General Accounting Office, National Security and International Affairs Division, "Gender Issues," Report No. GAO/NSAID-99-7, 19 October 1998, p. 4.

personal experiences as a combat pilot and military commander frame my analysis. The views in this article are my own and not the views of the USAF or the DoD. These views are a result of research and over 18 years of personal experience in uniform.

⁶ The A-10 is a single-seat attack aircraft that was designed to integrate with combat ground forces to kill the enemy in close combat, providing Close Air Support. It carries 1174 rounds of 30mm bullets and a variety of other gravity bombs, laser guided bombs, cluster munitions, missiles, and rockets.

Chapter 2

Current Context of the Debate on Women in Ground Combat

The most recent version of the DoD “ground combat exclusion policy” was established in 1994. The DoD policy states:

“Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground...”⁷

The policy goes on to define direct combat as:

“engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with hostile force’s personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, and shock effect.”⁸

However, the policy added additional restrictions:

“These policies and regulations may include the following restrictions on the assignment of women:

- Where the Service Secretary attests that the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive;
- Where units and positions are doctrinally required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units that are closed to women;
- Where units are engaged in long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions; and
- Where job related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the vast majority of women service members.”⁹

⁷ Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to Secretary of Army, Navy, Air Force, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Assistant Secretaries of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and Reserve Affairs, memorandum, 13 January 1994 as quoted in HASC Report No. 103-50, Hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, “Assignment of Army and Marine Corps Women Under the New Definition of Ground Combat,” 6 October 1994. pp. 90-91.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

What this means is that women are prohibited from serving with infantry, tank (armor), and artillery units below the brigade level in the Army and Marine Corps, on Navy submarines and other ships with close quarters, and in Special Forces units in all the service branches.¹⁰

Additionally, by policy, women are excluded from serving in support units that collocate with any of these ground combat units. This particular restriction, referred to as the “collocation policy,” is one of the most contentious in the current War on Terror.¹¹

In the Spring of 2005, Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), and Representative John McHugh (R-NY), Chairman of the HASC Subcommittee on Personnel, introduced a no-notice amendment to the 2006 Defense Authorization Bill creating a ground combat exclusion law for the first time in U.S. history, and prohibiting women from serving in Army forward support companies (FSCs). This highly political move gained immediate public attention and provoked strong objections by Army leadership, DoD leadership, and many members of Congress. According to the Washington Post, Army Lieutenant General James L. Campbell, Director of the Army Staff, quickly delivered a letter to ranking Democrat Representative Ike Skelton (D-MO), stating that if the amendment passed, “a total of 21,925 spaces currently open for assignment to female soldiers would be closed.”¹² Retired General Gordon Sullivan, former Army Chief of Staff and President of the Association of the United States Army, also wrote a letter to the House Armed Services Committee stating the amendment would be “confusing”¹³ and “detrimental to units.”¹⁴ In the

¹⁰ The Army is organized into units in the following order, largest to smallest: division, regiment, brigade, battalion, company, and platoon.

¹¹ For an extensive list of all jobs and units currently closed to women, see Appendix A.

¹² Ann ScottTyson, “More Objections to Women in Combat Ban,” *Washington Post*, 18 May 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/17/AR2005051701356.html> (accessed 19 October 2005).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

end, McHugh and Hunter's efforts were thwarted; the final amendment was a significant compromise. It mandated DoD notification to Congress of any opening or closing of positions or units under the ground combat exclusion policy as in effect October 1, 1994. However, it also mandated notification of any change that opened or closed any military career designator related to military operations on the ground after May 18, 2005.¹⁵ This requirement was unprecedented since Congress previously wanted notification only on changes to ground combat positions, not all career designators related to military operations on the ground (which includes essentially all Army and Marine positions). The amendment represented unmatched Congressional micromanagement of military personnel matters.

The debate on whether women should serve in "ground combat" continues and will likely be addressed repeatedly by Congress and the DoD. The discussion should take into consideration the nature of current warfare, women's performance in Iraq and Afghanistan, the transformation of the Army, and challenges in wartime to recruiting all military positions for an all-volunteer force.

Nature of Current Warfare

In wars like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is no "forward area" on the battlefield. Today's battlefield is non-linear and combat occurs in a 360 degree radius around the troops. Despite the ground combat exclusion policy, women are serving in real ground combat every day. They are vulnerable to being injured, killed, or captured; they are being shot at in ambushes and hit by improvised explosive devices (IEDs); they are employing their weapons and killing the enemy. Indeed, in the words of James Wise Jr. and Scott Baron in the preface of their new book *Women at War*, "[t]he insurgency war in Iraq, which has no front lines, has made the

¹⁵ 2006 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 541, www.thomas.gov (accessed 18 November 2006).

debate regarding women in combat irrelevant.”¹⁶ Or as Lieutenant Dawn Halfaker, an Army military police officer who lost her right arm during a rocket propelled grenade attack while on a reconnaissance mission in Iraq, put it: “Women in combat is not really an issue. It is happening... Everyone pretty much acknowledges there are no rear battle areas, no forward line of troops.”¹⁷

Based on the current policy, women serve as gunners on truck convoys and as security forces or military police on patrol in the streets of Baghdad, but they cannot be assigned to multiple launcher rocket system positions. They are vital to conducting searches at checkpoints in Iraq, a site of many insurgent attacks, since there would be strategic consequences of American men searching Iraqi women. Paradoxically, women fly Apache helicopters killing the enemy with high risk of being shot down, but they cannot fly special operations helicopters. The policy excludes women from being in ground units that have an *offensive* capability, but they can be in units that can and do fight in a *defensive* posture. This is reminiscent of earlier restrictions for women pilots, who could fly helicopters, tankers, reconnaissance, and cargo aircraft into enemy territory at risk of being shot down, but could not fly aircraft that could shoot back.

Trying to restrict women to defensive positions to avoid the risk of combat is ineffective in protecting women from the dangers of war. As of January 4, 2007, seventy U.S. military women were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan and two had been captured as Prisoners of War (POWs). More than 430 women have been wounded in battle. The military is now training all troops in basic combat skills, since recent war experiences indicate that anyone can find him or herself in close combat, regardless of whether assigned to “combat” or “combat support” units. Women are already in ground combat, and they are showing impressive results.

¹⁶ James E. Wise Jr. and Scott Baron, *Women at War*, (Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 2006) p. ix.

Women's Performance in Iraq/Afghanistan

Policy discussions must consider the performance of women in recent conflict. Women are displaying great courage and skill in ambushes, firefights, and battles on the ground. They are not just surviving, but earning medals for valor in combat. For example, on March 20, 2005, Army Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester was in a convoy of 26 vehicles that came under enemy ambush by 50 insurgents. Sergeant (Sgt) Hester “led her team through the kill zone, and into a flanking position, where she assaulted a trenchline with grenades and M203 grenade launcher rounds. Sgt Hester killed at least three insurgents”¹⁸ and was awarded the Silver Star for her bravery under fire. In 2003, Army Airborne Captain Kellie McCoy earned a Bronze Star with a combat “V” for Valor for her actions in Fallujah. “Leading a patrol that got ambushed and took casualties, she hopped up into the Humvee’s machine gun turret, killed a couple of the attackers, then led her men to safety.”¹⁹ As of December 18, 2006, the Army had awarded women warriors one Silver Star, seven Bronze Stars with valor, 13 Air Medals with valor, and 68 Army Commendation medals with valor.²⁰

Army Transformation

The discussion of the ground combat exclusion policy is complicated by a significant transformation in Army organization and warfighting concepts. The Army is now transforming to a modular organization of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) in an effort to become a lighter,

¹⁷ David Moniz, “Female Amputees Make Clear That All Troops Are On Front Lines,” *USA Today*, 28 April 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-04-28-female-amputees-combat_x.htm (accessed November 24, 2006).

¹⁸ 151 Cong. Rec. E1492 (daily ed. 14 July 2005) (statement of Rep. Cooper).

¹⁹ Brad Knickerbocker, “Do US women belong in the thick of the fighting?” *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 May 2005, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0526/p01s03-usmi.html> (accessed November 24, 2006).

²⁰ According to the Army G-1 staff, based on phone conversation on 18 December 2006.

leaner, more agile force.²¹ In this new organization, the current combat restrictions for women are harder to comply with without closing a significant number of positions now open to women. The Army is delicately dealing with this issue by assigning all Forward Support Companies (FSCs) to the brigade level in the BCT construct in order to stay within the letter of the collocation policy. This Army decision motivated the 2005 Hunter-McHugh amendment. The decision also elicited criticism that the Army is circumventing the DoD policy and Congressional notification requirements, and sparked the recent debate on the ground combat exclusion policy.²²

Recruiting Challenges

Finally, policy discussions concerning the ground combat exclusion for women must factor recruiting into the dialogue. In an all-volunteer force at war, recruiting quality has been a challenge for the Army especially. New enlisted recruits take an Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) which measures their overall aptitude. Recruits earn a percentile score of 1-99 and are placed into five categories (I=93-99, II=65-92, IIIA=50-64, IIIB=31-49, IV=10-30; V=1-9). Category V recruits are ineligible for service. Since 1991, the DoD capped Category IV recruits at 2 percent of the total. The DoD also desires that 90 percent of recruits have high school diplomas. Finally, although the DoD accepts recruits with criminal records, medical issues, or drug and alcohol problems via a waiver process, it desires to minimize these numbers. The

²¹ Under the old Army organization, the Division was the basic deployable warfighting unit. The new design has the Brigade as the basic warfighting unit. Therefore, a number of combat support functions that used to be at the division and brigade level are now assigned to the brigade and battalion level instead. Forward support companies are combat support units whose functions were previously attached to the brigade and division level and were open to women. The Army is attaching the FSCs to the brigade level (vs battalion), keeping the positions open to women, since the current combat exclusion policy restricts women from combat units or support units that collocate with combat units below the brigade level.

²² Elaine Donnelly, in particular, has been accusing the Army of circumventing DoD policy and Congressional notification requirements based on the FSC policy decision. See <http://cmrlink.org/WomenInCombat.asp?docID=262> (accessed 6 November 2006).

Army's recruiting difficulties can be seen in changes to these indicators. In 2004, 92 percent of Army recruits graduated from high school, 0.6 percent were in Category IV, and 12 percent required waivers for criminal offenses, drug or alcohol-related violations, or medical conditions. In 2005, the Army fell short of its recruiting goals for the first time since 1979. In order to meet subsequent goals, the Department DoD raised the Cat IV cap to 4 percent in 2005. In fiscal year 2006, the Army met its overall recruiting goal. However, only 81.2 percent of Army recruits graduated from high school, 3.7 percent were in Category IV, and 17 percent required waivers.²³ The Army has struggled to recruit adequate numbers of high-quality personnel, which will be more of a challenge if the Army end strength is significantly increased as proposed in December 2006.²⁴ These manpower challenges sparked recent proposals to reinstitute the draft. However, utilizing all volunteers, including both men and women, to maximize flexibility and capability should be considered prior to abandoning an all-volunteer force established 34 years ago.

The realities of current combat, the performance of women in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army transformation, and the challenges of meeting recruiting goals in an all-volunteer force provide the context for discussing and analyzing the ground combat exclusion policy. In order to fully analyze the current restrictions on women in combat, one must also be familiar with how and why relevant law and policy evolved. Laws and policies on women in the military reflect both

²³ This data was compiled from: DoD Instruction 1145.01, 20 September 2005; JCS/J1 FY 2006 recruiting, retention, and end strength document; Associated Press, "Lower Standards Help Army Meet Recruiting Goal", *USA Today*, 9 October 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-10-09-army-recruiting_x.htm (accessed December 14, 2006); Fred Kaplan, "GI Schmo: How low can Army recruiters go?" *War Stories*, 9 January 2006, <http://www.slate.com/toolbar.aspx?action=print&id=2133908> (accessed 14 December 2006); Population Representation in the Military Services, Appendix D, Table D-7, "NPS Active Component Enlisted Accessions by AFQT Category, FYs 173-2003, http://www.dod.mil/prhome/prrep2003/appendixd/d_07.html (accessed 4 January 2007).

²⁴ President Bush stated in December 2006 that he ordered the Secretary of Defense to devise a plan to increase Army and Marine end strength. Incoming House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton is also pushing for increasing Army end strength. Some officials are advocating an increase as large as 70,000 in active duty military endstrength. (Peter Baker, "U.S. Not Winning War in Iraq, Bush Says for 1st Time," *Washington Post*, 20 December 20, 2006. p. A1.)

issues of military readiness as well as a complex set of attitudes, emotions, culture, and politics about whether women “could” or “should” serve in certain roles.

Chapter 3

History of U.S. Law/Policy and Women's Roles in the Military²⁵

During the Revolutionary War, American women served on the battlefield as cooks, nurses, water bearers, laundresses, and spies. The most well-known women who fought in the Revolutionary War were Margaret Corbin and Deborah Sampson. Corbin took over her husband's artillery position after he was killed in the battle of Fort Mifflin and was also wounded. She was the first woman in America to receive a military pension for her service.²⁶ Sampson disguised herself as a man and served for three years, fighting in many battles before she was hospitalized and discovered to be a woman. She was quietly discharged.

In the Civil War, many women fought on both sides by disguising themselves as men. Women also served in the traditional roles as nurses, cooks, and laundresses, and were used as spies, couriers, and saboteurs. "They blew up bridges, cut telegraph wires, burned arsenals and warehouses, and helped prisoners and slaves escape."²⁷ The most famous military servicewoman of the Civil War was Dr. Mary Walker, who is still the only woman awarded the nation's highest

²⁵ Unless otherwise cited, information in this section was derived from Jeanne Holm, Major General USAF retired, *Women in the Military, an Unfinished Revolution*, revised edition, (Novato, CA, Presidio Press, 1982, revised 1992). The data in this section was also validated by the Women in Military Service to America (WIMSA) Foundation. For an extensive history of women in the U.S. military through DESERT STORM, see General Holm's book or visit the WIMSA Memorial in Arlington, V.A.

²⁶ Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, Vol XIV, April-September 1, 1779, Government Printing Office, 1909, Library of Congress, p. 805.

²⁷ Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 6.

military award—the Congressional Medal of Honor. Walker, a medical doctor with the Union Army, served in several major battles and was eventually captured and held as a prisoner of war.

During the Spanish-American War, Congress authorized the contracting of female nurses to support the war due to the shortage of medical personnel and typhoid fever epidemics among the troops. Although these nurses were not given military status, over 1500 women served in the United States, overseas, and on hospital ships. Twenty women died while serving in this war, mostly of typhoid fever. As a result of their service, Congress authorized a permanent Army Nurse Corps in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908.

In WWI, almost 23,000 women served as nurses at home and overseas, but this was the first conflict where women formally enlisted in the ranks in other roles in the Reserves. Women served as yeomen and clerks on the home front as well as contract telephone operators and stenographers in Europe. More than 400 U.S. women died while serving their country in WWI despite not yet having the right to vote.²⁸ “Many Army nurses were decorated, including three who received the Distinguished Service Medal, a combat medal second to the Medal of Honor.”²⁹ After the war, all women except nurses were discharged and laws passed to prevent their further enlistment.³⁰

Women’s role in the military in WWII was unprecedented and their performance laid the foundation for the formal integration of women into the U.S. armed forces after the war. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, Congress established the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and then the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), a Navy auxiliary, but the law forbade women from serving overseas. In 1943, at Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall’s urging, Congress passed a law upgrading the WAAC to the Women’s Army

²⁸ Almost all of these deaths were from the flu, not combat action (according to WIMSA).

²⁹ Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 10.

Corps (WAC), giving women in the Army full military status to include service overseas.³¹

Women also served in uniform as part of the Women's Medical Specialist Corps (WMSC), Marine Corps Women's Reserve, Coast Guard SPARs (from the motto *Semper Paratus* meaning always ready), and Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs). Over 350,000 women served in WWII—86 were Prisoners of War (POW) and more than 500 women lost their lives in service, 16 of whom were killed in action. Although not trained to fight, be under fire, or be a POW, many women demonstrated courage in all theaters during this war. For example, six Army nurses were killed and four were awarded the Silver Star for extraordinary courage under fire following the bombing and strafing of the hospital tents during the battle at Anzio.

The U.S. struggled with the limits of women's roles in WWII. They trained the WASPs to fly all aircraft in the inventory as ferry pilots, to train male pilots, and to tow planes for anti-aircraft gunner training, but would not allow them to fly in combat like the Russian women.³² After the British began to train and utilize women to operate anti-aircraft (AA) guns, General Marshall directed a secret experiment to see if American women could fill these positions. "The experiment stunned the general staff: the mixed gender units performed better than all-male units."³³ The Commander of the experimental units, Colonel Timberlake and his superior, Major General Lewis, were enthusiastic about the performance of the women and asked General Marshall to allow them to replace "half of the 3,630 men in his AA Defense Command with

³⁰ Ibid, pp 16-17.

³¹ D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War Two Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," *Journal of Military History*, April 1993, Vol 57, No. 2, p. 305.

³² Overall, WASPs "flew 60 million miles, ferried 12,650 aircraft, towed countless gunnery targets, and instructed hundreds of Air Force pilots. They flew as regularly and as long as male pilots in the same jobs and showed no difference in physical, mental, or physiological capabilities. Although thirty-eight lost their lives, the record shows that the women's accident rate was about the same as the men's." (Holm, *Women in the Military*, pp. 314-315). For more information on Russian female combat pilots in WWII, see Appendix B.

³³ Campbell, "Women in Combat: WWII", p. 302.

these more efficient soldiers.”³⁴ General Marshall deliberated with his staff and considered the political climate based on his difficulty getting approval from Congress to upgrade the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps to full military status able to serve overseas. Marshall decided to terminate the experiment. “General Russell Reynolds, Director of the Military Personnel Division, summarized the Army Staff’s consensus to eliminate the anti-aircraft experiment before Congress got wind of it: ‘It is not believed that national policy or public opinion is yet ready to accept the use of women in field force units.’”³⁵

Almost all women were rapidly demobilized after WWII. However, the 1948 Women’s Armed Services Integration Act (Public Law 80-625) formally integrated women into the peacetime military for the first time in history. The law limited women’s service in uniform, placing a cap on the number of women allowed (2 percent of the total force), the number of officers, (10 percent of the total number of women in uniform) and the permanent rank they could achieve (lieutenant colonel). The law prohibited women from serving on all Navy ships (except hospital and transport ships)³⁶ or in “combat aircraft”.³⁷ It did not specifically prohibit women from serving in combat positions on the ground. “Because the Army was unable to come

³⁴ Ibid, p. 304.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 305.

³⁶ The prohibition from serving on most Navy ships was not included in the original version of the law and was inserted at the whim of Congressman Vinson after an exchange between the Congressman and Navy officials during a hearing. Vinson stated: “I am just throwing it out for what it is worth. Those are my views. I think it will strengthen the bill to have it positively understood by Congress that ships are not places to which these women are going to be detailed and nobody has any authority to detail them to serve on ships. Of course, they are not going to be detailed to serve on ships, but you cannot tell what happens... somebody might say they need a few of them up there to do communications or other kinds of work and I do not think a ship is a proper place for them to serve. Let them serve on shore in the Continental United States and outside of the United States, but keep them off ships. Of course, they ought to be on hospital ships. I would not want to restrict (the prohibition) to combatant vessels. Put down ‘serve in sea duty.’ You have auxiliary ships as well as combat ships. Just fix it so they cannot go to sea at all.” (Hearing before the Subcommittee on Organization and Mobilization of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, 80th Congress, 2d Session, 5689-5713, 1948, quoted in *Owens v. Brown*, 455 F. Supp. 291 (1978) p. 306.) This prohibition based on the feelings of one Congressman would stand in law for 30 years.

³⁷ The services believed any trained pilot had the potential to be a combat pilot and as a result, banned women from becoming pilots, despite the performance of the WASPs. (Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 126)

up with an adequate, acceptable definition of combat, Congress elected to leave this matter to be sorted out by the Secretary of the Army so long as he clearly understood the intent of the Congress, which was *no combat for women*. ”³⁸

Many women who served in WWII hoped the 1948 Integration Act would serve as a springboard for increased integration and equality for women in the military in the future. Instead, women’s roles in the military in the 1950s-1960s reflected women’s struggle to be accepted outside their traditional roles. Physical appearance became an important criterion for selection, women were expected to uphold a feminine image, and women did not receive weapons training. At the start of the Korean conflict, 22,000 women were on active duty performing mostly administrative, medical, communications, or intelligence work.³⁹ Some “[s]ervicewomen who had joined the Reserves following WWII [were] involuntarily recalled to active duty during the war.”⁴⁰ However, unlike in WWII, the military decided to only deploy nurses to the war zone--on the ground, on hospital ships, and as flight nurses. Therefore, only “[a]bout 540 women served in the combat zone,” while 120,000 women were in uniform during the Korean War era.⁴¹

The same assumptions about women’s roles carried through the Vietnam War, where only approximately 7,500 women (mostly nurses) deployed to Southeast Asia. Some women who served during WWII were frustrated by this policy. One Air Force Master Sergeant said: “I served in North Africa and Italy—I can sure as hell serve in Vietnam”⁴² after she volunteered to deploy but was turned down. From March 1962-March 1973, only one woman, a nurse, died

³⁸ Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 119.

³⁹ Rosemarie Skaine, *Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat*, (Jefferson, NC, McFarland & Co, Inc., 1999) p. 57.

⁴⁰ WIMSA, <http://www.womensmemorial.org/Education/timeline.html>.

⁴¹ Skaine, *Women at War*, p. 57.

⁴² Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 210.

from hostile fire in Vietnam as a result of an enemy rocket attack in 1969.⁴³ Brigadier General Evelyn “Pat” Foote (United States Army, retired) conveyed her experiences: “When I was in Vietnam in 1967, I was not weapons qualified. In fact, we were not allowed to carry weapons. I was up along the Cambodian border once with a field artillery battalion. The only thing I could do was run around carrying a purse—I called it my ‘M-16 purse.’ I was wearing a baseball cap, no helmet, no flak jacket, no weapons, nothing. I was a liability to that unit. Women in the Army don’t want to be liabilities. They want to be assets, partners in defense with their male counterparts.”⁴⁴ This sentiment is still echoed by women in uniform today.

The late 1960s and 1970s were characterized by changes in policy and law that incrementally opened many opportunities to women in uniform. In 1967, an amendment to the Women’s Armed Service Integration Act (Public Law 90-30) removed the cap on rank and total number of women allowed in uniform.⁴⁵ By 1972, all ROTC programs were opened to women, but scholarship opportunities were limited. In 1973 the military transitioned from being a mix of draftees and volunteers to an all-volunteer force. The Army and Navy opened flight training to women. In 1976 Congress passed a law which admitted women to all service academies and the Air Force opened flight training to women for the first time in almost 30 years. Also in 1976, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit considered a challenge to the policy that discharged pregnant servicewomen from the military in *Cushman vs. Crawford*. The court ruled that the Marine Corps policy violated the Fifth Amendment Due Process clause since the policy had to be based on the assumption that pregnant women were permanently unfit for military duty.⁴⁶ In

⁴³ Skaine, *Women in the Military*, p. 58. Her name was Lieutenant Sharon A. Lane.

⁴⁴ Phone conversation with General Foote on 5 January 2007.

⁴⁵ GAO Testimony of Martin F. Ferber before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel and Compensation, United States House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Committee, “Combat Exclusion Laws For Women in the Military”, 19 November 1987, report # GAO/T-NSIAD-88-8, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Crawford v. Cushman*, 531 F.2d 1114 (1976).

1977, the USAF began to train women as Titan missile crewmembers. The Army created a combat exclusion policy in 1977, as the WAC was about to be dissolved and women were further integrated into the Army mainstream. This policy stated that: “[w]omen may not serve in Infantry, Armor, Cannon Field Artillery, Combat Engineer, or Low Altitude Air Defense Artillery units of Battalion/Squadron size or smaller.”⁴⁷

In 1978, a Navy Interior Communications Electrician named Yona Brown and other Navy women filed a class action law suit against the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy challenging the law⁴⁸ that banned women from serving on ships. Judge John Sirica ruled that the Navy could no longer use this statute as the sole basis for excluding women from serving aboard Navy ships. He stated the policy tended “to suggest a statutory purpose more related to the traditional way of thinking of women than to the demands of military preparedness.”⁴⁹ This ruling prompted another amendment to the 1948 Armed Services Integration Act (P.L. 95-485) which opened permanent assignments for women on non-combat ships and temporary assignments (less than 6 months) on combat ships not expected to have a combat mission at the time.⁵⁰

In 1981, then-Army Chief of Staff General Edward Meyer directed the creation of a Women in the Army (WITA) Policy Review Group. It was tasked to review issues regarding women in combat and provide policy recommendations. WITA defined direct combat as: “engaging an enemy with individual or crew weapons while being exposed to direct enemy fire, a high

⁴⁷ Women in the Army Policy Review, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army, Washington D.C., 12 November 1982, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Now 10 USC Section 6015.

⁴⁹ *Owens v. Brown*, 455 F. Supp. 291 (1978) p. 306. The opinion in this case provides the foundation for potential future arguments against women in additional combat roles. For instance, Judge Sirica stated: “because of section 6015, sex is required to take precedence over individual ability where the essential part of naval service is concerned. Significantly, none if the limitations and disadvantages facing Navy women is traceable to any studied evaluation made of male and female capabilities that reveals that women lack the native ability to perform competently in positions held exclusively by men (p. 295).

probability of direct physical contact with the enemy's personnel and a substantial risk of capture. Direct combat takes place while closing with the enemy by fire, maneuver, and shock effect to destroy or capture him or while repelling his assault by fire, close combat, or counterattack.”⁵¹ Based on this definition, the Army reviewed all Army positions, missions, doctrine, and location and created the Army Direct Combat Probability Code (DCPC) system to identify the probability that each position would be in direct combat. All positions were assigned a code, P1 through P7, where P1 represents the highest probability of engaging in direct combat and P7 the lowest. P1 positions would be off-limits for women. Based on this analysis, WITA concluded that 23 additional specialties must be closed to women.⁵² The DCPC is still used today as the means to identify which Army positions are closed to women.

In 1988, the DoD created what is known as the “risk rule” to further identify and narrow which traditional non-combat positions could be closed to women based on the mission and location of the job on the battlefield. The rule stated that the “risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture are proper criteria for closing noncombat positions or units to women, provided that... such risks are equal to or greater than experienced by combat units in the same theater of operations.”⁵³

These policy and legislative lines were not so cleanly drawn on the battlefield. 770 women deployed to Panama in 1989 in support of Operation JUST CAUSE serving in various “combat support” positions as defined by the DoD at that time. This included Army helicopter pilots who earned air medals for “combat missions” and a commander of a military police company. In 1990 and 1991, over 40,000 U.S. military women deployed for Operation DESERT

⁵⁰ Ferber GAO testimony, “Combat Exclusion Laws,” p. 4.

⁵¹ Women in the Army Policy Review, p. 7.

⁵² Ibid, p. 8.

⁵³ Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 433.

SHIELD/DESERT STORM, consisting of 7 percent of the total force deployed. Two women in combat support jobs were captured as POWs and 13 women were killed.⁵⁴

Women's participation and performance in Panama and Iraq helped spark a new discussion on women in combat. "Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said on 2 March 1991, 'Women have made a major contribution to this [war] effort. We could not have won without them.'

Commanders in the field echoed similar sentiments. According to the Coalition commander, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, American military women had performed 'magnificently.'"⁵⁵

Congress almost immediately began to consider repeal of the 43 year old combat exclusion laws. On December 5, 1991, the Defense Authorization Act (PL 102-190) was signed by the President, which included a provision that repealed the law that prohibited women from flying combat aircraft.⁵⁶ This now left the issue to DoD discretion. The new legislation also directed the creation of a Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces to "study and make recommendations on a wide range of issues relating to service of women in the Armed Forces, with principle focus on combat roles."⁵⁷

President George H. W. Bush created the Presidential Commission in April 1992, which released its report on November 15, 1992. In summary, the Commission recommended women continue to be excluded from ground combat and air combat (and those exclusions be codified in law), but recommended combat ships be opened to women. The Commission came under a great deal of criticism for being politically charged and very subjective. According to Vice Admiral

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 455-461, 469.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 470.

⁵⁶ Title 10 U.S. Code Section 8549 was rescinded and Section 6015 was amended to remove the combat aviation prohibition.

⁵⁷ William P. Lawrence, "Women in Combat, The Commission," *Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1993, p. 48. The requirement for the Commission was a tactic by conservatives in the Senate Armed Services Committee to table/stall a proposed amendment to open combat aviation to women. The amendment to repeal the combat aviation exclusion was re-introduced on the floor of the Senate and approved, but the commission requirement remained in the language of the bill (Holm, *Women in the Military*, p. 487-503).

William P. Lawrence, (United States Navy, retired), the “White House disregarded the Secretary of Defense and Congress’s nominations of several distinguished individuals of recognized competence, experience, and objectivity. Instead, appointed among the 15 commissioners were five arch-conservatives, who from the beginning of deliberations appeared determined not only to prevent expansion of women’s roles in the military, but if possible to roll them back.”⁵⁸ Upon release of its report, *The Washington Post* referred to it as a “partisan mess” and stated: “A new administration, which will take up the question of women in combat along with other military issues, would do best to ignore most of the report and start again.”⁵⁹

The new Clinton administration did just that and on April 28, 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announced his decision to open all combat aviation assignments to women. He also directed the Navy to open more ship assignments and types of ships to women within current law and directed the Navy to draft a legislative proposal to repeal the law that prohibited women from serving on ships engaged in combat missions. The Secretary also directed the Army to study opening additional jobs including air defense artillery and field artillery. Exceptions to the policy would “include units engaged in direct combat on the ground, assignments where physical requirements are prohibitive, and assignments where the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive.”⁶⁰

On November 30, 1993, the President signed the 1994 Defense Authorization Act (PL 103-160), which repealed the law (Title 10 U.S. Code Section 6015) that prohibited women from serving on combat ships. The new law also directed the Secretary of Defense to provide

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 48.

⁵⁹ As quoted in Lawrence, “The Commission,” p. 51.

⁶⁰ Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to Secretary of Army, Navy, Air Force, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Assistant Secretaries of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and Reserve Affairs, memorandum, 28 April 1994 as as quoted in HASC Report No. 103-50, Hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, “Assignment of Army and Marine Corps Women Under the New Definition of Ground Combat,” 6 October 1994, pp. 88-89.

Congress 30 days notice when opening any additional assignments of women to “combat units, class of combat vessel, or type of combat platform.”⁶¹ It also directed the Secretary of Defense to provide 90 days notice to Congress on any changes to DoD’s ground combat exclusion policies, including a detailed description, justification, and implications of proposed changes on the constitutionality of the male-only draft. Upon the passing of this law, the United States no longer had any law restricting women from serving in any positions or units in the military. All restrictions were (and continue to be) a matter of DoD policy, albeit with Congressional reporting mechanisms and oversight.

On January 13, 1994 Secretary Aspin signed a policy memo to rescind the “risk rule” policy as a basis for barring assignment of women to some non-combat positions. In its place, he established the current ground combat exclusion policy that loosened the direct ground combat definition. According to the Government Accounting Office (GAO), “In DoD’s view, the risk rule was no longer appropriate based on experiences in Operation DESERT STORM, where everyone in the theater of operation was at risk.”⁶² On July 28, 1994, the newly appointed Secretary of Defense, William Perry, notified Congress that, as a result of the new ground combat exclusion policy and a thorough review of implementation by all services, 81,000 jobs previously closed to women would be opened by October 1, 1994.⁶³

⁶¹ Excerpt from the Conference Report (U.S. House of Representatives Report 103-357) to accompany H.R. 2401, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, 10 November 1993, Section 542, as quoted in HASC Report No. 103-50, Hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, “Assignment of Army and Marine Corps Women Under the New Definition of Ground Combat,” 6 October 6 1994, p. 87.

⁶² GAO National Security and International Affairs Division report to Senator Robb on “Gender Issues,” GAO/NSIAD-99-7, 19 October 1998, p. 1.

⁶³ Secretary of Defense William Perry to Honorable Ronald V. Dellums, Chairman of House Armed Services Committee, 28 July 1994, memorandum, as quoted in HASC Report No. 103-50, Hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, “Assignment of Army and Marine Corps Women Under the New Definition of Ground Combat”, 6 October 1994, pp. 97-98.

According to the GAO, in 1998, approximately 221,000 positions out of 1.4 million in the military were closed to women: 101,733 due to direct combat, 89,755 due to the collocation rule, 25,663 due to living arrangements, and 3,935 in Special Operations.⁶⁴ The GAO report also stated that the approved direct combat definition “may not account for anticipated changes in military operations”⁶⁵ since it links the definition to a position “well forward on the battlefield” in a linear battle. The report concluded that “[g]round combat experts in the Army and Marine Corps note that, in the post-Cold war era, the non-linear battlefield is becoming more common. Should this trend continue, defining direct ground combat as occurring ‘well forward on the battlefield’ may become increasingly less descriptive of actual battlefield conditions.”⁶⁶ Just a few years later, this prediction would become very apparent post 9-11 in Afghanistan and Iraq.

⁶⁴ GAO/NSIAD-99-7, 19 October 1998, p. 5. According to JCS/J1, these numbers are similar today, based on no significant changes to end strength and policy, but the DoD does not actively track the numbers of positions closed to women. See Appendix A for a list of closed positions as of 2005 as reported by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Ground Combat Exclusion Policy

From Fort Washington in 1776 to Camp Victory in 2006, policy and law about women in combat roles shows a progressive march toward full integration based on capability, not gender. In the final push of the march, the nature of war we fight today in Iraq and Afghanistan has rendered untenable the DoD's definition of "direct combat." Nonetheless, the policy of exclusion remains. Next, we analyze the common arguments revolving around this question: Why are women as an entire group still restricted from assignment to ground combat units, support units that routinely collocate with them, and special operations, even if they are fully qualified and capable of service in these positions?⁶⁷

Some of the common arguments underpinning a policy of exclusion of women from combat roles are based on opinions as to whether women "could" serve in positions closed to them, while others deal with whether they "should".⁶⁸ These arguments are founded on the premise that women and men should not be treated as individuals, but rather as a group with generalized characteristics. The most typical arguments against women in ground combat are: 1) women lack the physical strength to be in ground combat; 2) women's presence will decrease unit cohesion and therefore effectiveness; and 3) women just don't belong in combat.

⁶⁷ From this point on, when I discuss the "ground combat exclusion policy," I am including ground combat units, support units that collocate with them, and special operations units. This article does not address the prohibition of women serving on submarines and other small Navy vessels due to berthing issues.

Physical Strength

On average, men are stronger than women. The 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces stated: “The evidence before the Commission clearly shows distinct physiological differences between men and women. Most women are shorter in stature, have less muscle mass, and weigh less than men. These physiological differences place women at a distinct disadvantage when performing tasks requiring a high level of muscular strength and aerobic capacity, such as hand-to-hand fighting, digging, carrying heavy loads, lifting, and other tasks central to ground combat.”⁶⁹ The report goes on to state: “The Commission also heard from women of tremendous physical ability who expressed a desire to serve in the ground combat arms.”⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the Commission recommended excluding women from combat aircraft and ground combat, basing their recommendations partly on the physical strength.

It is my judgment as a female who has engaged in combat and led others into combat that women should not be restricted based on physical strength generalizations about their gender from any assignments for which they are physically qualified for the following reasons:

a) Military effectiveness requires that we pick the best qualified person for the job, regardless of gender. Many men do not have the physical strength or stamina to be in “ground combat” positions and should not be eligible for combat assignments just because of their gender. Similarly, a woman should not be excluded from assignments to these units if she has the requisite physical strength and stamina. A gender neutral policy will allow the most capable force to be assembled. All potential recruits should be screened as individuals, as men are today,

⁶⁸ For examples of women in combat in other nations in the modern era, see Appendix B.

⁶⁹ Presidential Commission on Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, p. 24.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 24.

rather than eliminating one group of potential recruits on the basis of a stereotype or generalization. Military effectiveness, not gender, should be the sole criteria for assignment policies.

b) This same argument was used to keep women out of fighter aircraft in the early 1990s and proved to be wrong. During the debate on whether women should or could be fighter pilots, many people used the “physical strength” argument to advocate the continued prohibition on women. Five members the Presidential Commission expressed this view in the “Alternative Views” section of the Commission’s report.⁷¹ They quoted many experienced male fighter pilots who discussed the physical strength and stamina required to be a combat fighter pilot and how women have yet to prove they are physically capable of the rigors of aerial combat. For example, when asked about women who were already flying F-18s in the Navy as test pilots and instructors, one Navy Top Gun instructor pilot was quoted as saying: “[Y]es, we do have women flying F-18s today, and that is a fact. They are currently not flying the F-18s that any of us have flown in the fleet or out in the combat missions. To compare the missions that they are doing today to what we are doing is like comparing driving the L.A. Freeway to driving the Indianapolis 500. It’s just not the same.”⁷² They also quoted Air Force Lieutenant General Buster Glossen (who was responsible for air campaign strategy and execution in DESERT STORM) extensively on the stamina, which he defined as strength and endurance, needed to be a fighter pilot. He described the strength and endurance that fighter pilots need to sustain high-G

⁷¹ The five Commissioners were Samuel Cockerham, Elaine Donnelly, Sarah White, Kate Walsh O’Beirne, and Ronald Ray.

⁷² Presidential Commission, p. 68.

forces without losing consciousness as well as to fly 7-9 hour grueling combat missions on a daily basis and said “the jury is still out” on whether women have the requisite stamina.⁷³

It does take a great deal of strength and endurance to be a fighter pilot. But notwithstanding the commission’s and Glossen’s doubts, at least 49 women in the Air Force have completed fighter pilot training successfully and most, including the author, have flown long, demanding combat missions for Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, DESERT FOX, ALLIED FORCE, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM. Air Force women fighter pilots have earned 16 Distinguished Flying Crosses in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001.⁷⁴ Critics who made statements in the past that women do not have the strength and stamina to be fighter pilots in combat have been proven wrong by women’s actual performance. Some, like Elaine Donnelly, were eventually forced to concede that women fighter pilots “seem to be serving very well” and “appear to be competent and well qualified, and by all accounts are doing well.”⁷⁵ Despite this experience with female fighter pilots, these critics continue to use similar arguments to keep the remaining combat exclusions in place.

c) *Whole person qualities.* All personnel wearing the uniform must have some basic level of physical strength to ensure they can defend themselves in battle. However, a capable combat soldier must possess more than just physical strength. Skill, motivation, and a fighting spirit are just as crucial for the warrior, and all of these characteristics are gender-blind. Army and Marine leadership have recently been emphasizing additional crucial traits like judgment, discipline,

⁷³ Ibid, p. 67. When combat aviation opened to women in 1993, I was training to represent the USAF at the Hawaii Ironman World Triathlon Championship, a grueling athletic event consisting of a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and 26.2 mile run. It is one of the ultimate physical tests of strength, endurance, and mental toughness. Each military service picked its best athletes for the competition. I easily won the women’s military division and beat all but just a handful of the men in all four branches of the service. Yet, some were still arguing that all women did not have the physical strength or endurance to be fighter pilots.

⁷⁴ According to CENTAF/A1 per email dated 3 January 3 2007.

⁷⁵ Lisa Hoffman, “Women in the military no longer remarkable,” Scripps Howard News Service, 11 January 2002, http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/further_reading_USA.html (accessed 24 November 2006).

restraint, and intellect, to name a few. Former Marine Corps Commandant General Charles Krulak has spoken and written about the “strategic corporal” who has to be ready to fight a three block war. On any given day, in any contingency, that corporal may be dealing with hostile acts on one block, intervening to prevent conflict on another block, and providing humanitarian assistance on the third block.

“The inescapable lesson of Somalia and of other recent operations, whether humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, or traditional warfighting, is that their outcome may hinge on the decisions made by small unit leaders and by actions taken at the *lowest* level. The Corps is, by design, a relatively young force. Success or failure will rest, increasingly, with the rifleman and with his ability to make the *right* decision at the *right* time at the point of contact... [T]oday’s Marines will often operate ‘far from the flagpole’ without the direct supervision of senior leadership... [T]hey will be asked to deal with a bewildering array of challenges and threats. In order to succeed under such demanding conditions, they will require unwavering maturity, judgment, and strength of character. Most importantly, these missions will require them to confidently make well-reasoned and *independent* decisions under extreme stress—decisions that will likely be subject to harsh scrutiny of both the media and the court of public opinion.”⁷⁶

Warriors must be able to carry their packs, but also must possess these other vital qualities that are more likely to affect the strategic outcome. In 2005, the Secretary of Defense commissioned RAND to study various factors that determine military performance. The study primarily addressed experience, training, and aptitude. It is interesting to note that the RAND study did not even include physical strength as a relevant factor in measuring military aptitude.⁷⁷ The study found overwhelming evidence that aptitude (as measured by AFQT scores) was a crucial factor in determining effectiveness in combat forces. For example, replacing a tank gunner who had a Category IV AFQT score with one who was Category IIIA improved the chances of hitting their targets by 34 percent.⁷⁸ The Army almost doubled the number of

⁷⁶ Charles C. Krulak, General, “Strategic Corporal, Leadership in the Three Block War”, *Marines*, Jan 1999, pp. 236-237. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁷ Jennifer Kavanagh, “Determinants of Productivity for Military Personnel—A Review of Findings on the Contribution of Experience, Training, and Aptitude to Military Performance”, RAND Corporation, 2005, p. 27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 27.

Category IV recruits in 2006. Women recruits are generally brighter than their male counterparts and they have fewer disciplinary problems.⁷⁹ In order to get the best team of ground combat warriors based on physical strength and the whole person, it is not logical to include marginally qualified CAT IV males while excluding physically qualified CAT I-III females.

d) The Author's Personal Experience. Prior to combat aviation being open to women, I was a T-37 Instructor Pilot. The Air Force had a merit-based rating system for men and women throughout Undergraduate Pilot Training. All pilots received grades on every test, simulator, and flying maneuver and were rank ordered based on gender-blind performance prior to choosing assignments. I witnessed several classes graduate where a woman was ranked in the top of her class based on performance, yet due to only her gender, the male pilots below her in the order of merit went on to be fighter pilots instead of her. That type of policy does not result in the most capable fighting force.

After I became a fully qualified combat ready A-10 pilot, I discovered there was a policy that still limited me from doing my full job. Prior to 2005, all A-10 squadrons were responsible for providing battalion air liaison officers (BALOs) to specific Army ground combat battalions. BALOs are trained to provide advice and coordination on integration of air power for the battalion. They also control air strikes to support ground forces by talking to the pilots on the radio. These pilots train and deploy on the ground with their assigned units when called and many A-10 pilots served in this capacity on the ground in DESERT STORM and IRAQI FREEDOM. In order to qualify as a BALO, a pilot had to attend a three-week school, pass a

⁷⁹ Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics from 1981-1985 Lawrence Korb stated: "In my view, women actually increase readiness, since they have more education and higher aptitudes than their male counterparts. But we hear a lot of anecdotes about women tending to be absent from duty for medical reasons more frequently than men. These anecdotes, though, overlook the fact that men are frequently absent for more 'traditional' reasons—being drunk and disorderly, for example..." as quoted in Sheila Nataraj Kirby and Harry J. Thie, "Enlisted Personnel Management: A Historical Perspective," RAND Corporation, 1996, pp. 96-97, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR755/ (accessed December 14, 2006).

physical fitness test, and go through a local certification program which included controlling live air strikes. I earned distinguished graduate status at the school, aced the gender-blind physical fitness test, and became certified as a BALO. However, due to my gender and the collocation policy, I was prohibited from being assigned to an Army unit and doing that part of my duty. This policy made no sense and I sent an initiative up the chain of command to ask for an exception to policy. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force approved and received agreement from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs for me to deploy to an exercise as a “test case” BALO. On the eve of the exercise in 1997, the initiative was postponed. The email forwarded to the author stated: “this initiative will happen,--probably sooner than later. But, as I told you, I don’t think the timing is right.”⁸⁰ The initiative never happened. BALO positions were converted to enlisted full time controllers in 2005, and women are still prohibited from serving in this job.

Cohesion

Those who advocate restricting women from “ground combat” dismiss the argument that combat effectiveness is enhanced by having all members of the force eligible for all positions. As stated in the Alternative Views section of the Presidential Commission report: “The key question in preparing to win and survive in combat is not what is best for the individual but what is best for the unit and the military as a whole. This is why the Commission spent considerable time seeking and evaluating testimony and studies on unit cohesion.”⁸¹ Being a concept that relates to the quality of relations between individuals, as opposed to a characteristic of an

⁸⁰ Email from 549 CTS/CC to 355 OG/CC on 16 January 1997. This email was from the squadron commander responsible for coordinating the Air Force support to the Army exercise and was sent to the Operations Group Commander at Davis Monthan Air Force Base. The email explained that the exercise we picked for my test case deployment was high visibility for the Army to test future technology and tactics and not ideal for an experiment with female BALOs.

individual, cohesion is more difficult to measure empirically and therefore less subject to objective assessment.

Cohesion is a complex term that describes the unity and bonding that a unit must possess in order to be a team in battle. There are two general types of cohesion: social cohesion and task cohesion.

“Social Cohesion refers to the nature and quality of the emotional bonds of friendship, liking, caring, and closeness among group members. A group is socially cohesive to the extent that its members like each other, prefer to spend their social time together, enjoy each other’s company, and feel emotionally close to one another.

Task Cohesion refers to the shared commitment among members to achieve a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group. A group with high task cohesion is composed of members who share a common goal and who are motivated to coordinate their efforts as a team to achieve their goal.”⁸²

While focusing a great deal on cohesion as a reason to exclude women from combat, the 1992 Presidential Commission admitted: “There are no authoritative military studies of mixed-gender ground combat cohesion, since available cohesion research has been conducted among male-only ground combat units.”⁸³ To fill the void of data, they resorted to interviewing many men who never had women in their units to get their opinions on how women would affect cohesion, a rather biased sample. These same techniques were used in the past to keep black Americans from serving in racially integrated units. For example, in 1925 the Army War College published a study claiming that close association of blacks and whites in military organizations was detrimental to harmony and efficiency and that blacks were inherently more cowardly than whites.⁸⁴ Experience has long since shown these claims to be completely false. With military

⁸¹ Presidential Commission, p. 44.

⁸² MacCoun, 1993 p. 291 as quoted by Laura L. Miller and John Allen Williams, “Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness” in *Soldiers and Civilians, The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, edited by Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn (Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2001) p. 389.

⁸³ Presidential Commission, p. 25.

⁸⁴ Henderson Baker II, “Women in Combat: A Cultural Issue?” Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2006, p. 6.

readiness at stake, we should not let prejudicial racist or sexist attitudes drive our policies.

Women, by their presence alone, simply do not impede cohesion from happening for a variety of reasons.

a) Military cohesion is based on people uniting for a common mission/purpose, not based on the group consisting of a common race, creed, or gender. Studies have also shown that it is task cohesion that is essential to getting the job done, though there is some debate whether task cohesion begets mission effectiveness or an effective mission begets cohesion.⁸⁵ “Task cohesion has a modest but reliable influence on performance; social cohesion does not have an independent effect after controlling for task cohesion. Under some conditions, high social cohesion is actually detrimental to unit performance; moderate social cohesion appears most beneficial.”⁸⁶

In 1997, RAND analysts Margaret Harrell and Laura Miller conducted a study on the expansion of women’s roles in the military following law/policy changes in the early 1990s and the effect on cohesion, readiness, and morale. It focused its study on units that opened new positions to women after the 1993-1994 policy changes. When asked about the factors that determined their unit’s level of cohesion, only 10 out of 619 even mentioned gender, despite the survey cover and introduction explaining that gender was an important component of the study.⁸⁷ The RAND authors concluded that “gender divisions were minimal or invisible in units with high cohesion. Gender was reported as a secondary issue in units that had conflicting groups, and then it took a back seat to divisions along work groups or rank lines.”⁸⁸ Some respondents

⁸⁵ David R. Segal and Meyer Kestnbaum, “Professional Closure in the Military Labor Market: A Critique of Pure Cohesion,” in *The Future of the Army Profession*, edited by Don M. Snider and Gale L. Watkins (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002) p. 441-458.

⁸⁶ MacCoun, 1993 p. 291 as quoted by Miller and Williams.

⁸⁷ Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller. “New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects upon Readiness, Cohesion and Morale.” RAND Corporation, 1997, p. 57.

⁸⁸ RAND Research Brief, “Military Readiness: Women are Not a Problem,” http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB7515/index1.html. p. 3 (accessed 19 October 2006). It is interesting to

stated that women increase unit cohesion. “Where people mentioned a positive effect of gender integration on cohesion, it was to comment that women’s presence had raised the professional standards of conduct in the military workplace.”⁸⁹

In 1999, the GAO conducted a report on perceptions of readiness in selected units. They concluded: “Our survey on the perception of readiness of units opened to women since 1993 showed that both men and women had a positive view of their own readiness. Furthermore, most men and women agreed that women either affected readiness no differently from men or affected readiness positively or very positively.”⁹⁰

b) Cohesion is a leadership issue. The Presidential Commission concluded that women’s presence *might* impede cohesion in ground combat units due to lack of ability to do the job, lack of privacy, traditional male views of women, sexual misconduct, and pregnancy. However, none of those dynamics listed are inevitable and the right leadership climate can ensure they are identified and eliminated. Cohesion between all males *might* also be impeded by a number of elements as well, like lack of ability of any individual to do their job or carry their weight, selfishness, racist attitudes, or lack of integrity.

Double standards of performance should not be tolerated for any subset of a group and I will address this issue in detail later in the article. Likewise, poorly timed pregnancies can decrease readiness and therefore cohesion and morale and I will also discuss this issue in the next section. Privacy issues can be addressed by professional adults being discrete and respecting each other as they focus on the mission, get rest, and attend to personal hygiene. Prejudiced attitudes

note that Elaine Donnelly dismisses the RAND study as censored by the Pentagon. On her website for the Center for Military Readiness, she makes statements like: the report was “revised and ‘cleansed’ of political incorrectness.... Unidentified spinmeisters exorcised sensitive passages.... Congress should investigate Pentagon censorship...”

⁸⁹ Harrell and Miller, “New Opportunities for Women,” p. 67.

toward women need to be identified, confronted, and altered, just as they were addressed during racial integration of the military.

Sexual misconduct can come in the form of consensual sexual relationships that degrade good order and discipline, as well as sexual assault. With regard to the former, sexual relations are forbidden anywhere in the combat zone by the combatant commander. Leadership must ensure discipline in all troops to follow this and many other orders that go against our nature as human beings. Harrell and Miller discovered that gender issues were cited by fewer than 1 percent of their respondents when asked about issues that affect morale in recently gender-integrated units. However, they concluded that, “when they occur, dating and sexual relationships, even when not proscribed by the regulations, are often problematic within military units.”⁹¹ Leadership is vital to ensuring no relationships in the unit (of any type, sexual or nonsexual) decrease good order and discipline and mission effectiveness.

With regard to sexual assault, if the U.S. military has a sexual predator in the ranks, he or she should be identified, punished, and removed from the team. Restricting female soldiers from combat units will not protect all women in uniform from male sexual predators. Male sexual predators will come in contact with other women—combat support personnel, enemy, and innocent civilians—who may be victimized. We have seen the strategic consequences of male soldiers raping innocent civilians. For example, U.S.-Japanese relations were severely strained in 1995 after three Marines raped a 12-year-old Okinawa girl. In December, 2006, the U.S. cancelled a joint military exercise with the Philippines and anti-U.S. sentiments were stirred over

⁹⁰ GAO Report to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, “Gender Issues: Perceptions of Readiness in Selected Units,” May 1999, NSIAD-99-120. p. 5.

⁹¹ Harrell and Miller, “New Opportunities for Women,” p. 83.

a custody dispute of a Marine convicted of raping a Filipino woman.⁹² The military must proactively address the issue of sexual assault in mixed gender units and swiftly remove and punish men and women who commit such crimes.⁹³ And blame must be placed appropriately: the assaulter is the one who degraded cohesion of the team, not the victim.

In sum, cohesion is a leadership issue, and leadership has the greatest effect on unit cohesion regardless of the gender makeup of the team. It takes leadership to mold any group of disparate human beings into an effective combat unit focused on a mission where sacrifices must be made, trust must be built, and personal qualities of duty, responsibility, integrity, and discipline are essential.

c) This same argument was used to keep all women out of fighter aircraft in the early 1990s and proven wrong. The Presidential Commission heard testimony from many fighter pilots about how they were sure the presence of women in fighter aviation would decrease cohesion and military effectiveness. One of the many examples is testimony by a Top Gun instructor pilot, representing the opinions of 21 out of 23 pilots in his unit:

“...the lieutenants out there, and the captains in the Marine Corps are screaming that ‘No, we don’t want this to happen.’ And one big reason for it is that we need to have those units act as units. When you are out there in your fleet squadron, it is very important that you act as one, and you believe and share your experiences with each and every member, and you expect a lot out of that person, and you have to act as a unit. And if you can’t do that—and we don’t believe you can act as a unit unless you keep it the way it is, where it’s the bonding—it’s that intangible, the bonding that makes a squadron good, better, and we don’t believe you can have that go on if we have females in aviation.”⁹⁴

Overall, Commissioner Elaine Donnelly summarized her views: “...most combat aviators were opposed to the assignment of women to air combat units, primarily because of their concerns

⁹² Associated Press, “War Games Canceled Over Rape Case,” 22 December 2006, <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,121145,00.html>, (accessed 4 January 2007); CNN report “U.S. servicemen convicted in Okinawa rape, 7 March 1996, http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9603/okinawa_rape/ (accessed 4 January 2007).

about the potential effects on unit cohesion which might decrease mission effectiveness and risk lives.”⁹⁵ Despite such views, the record has since shown that women have successfully integrated into combat aviation units and flown as teams in combat. The predictions of dire consequences and mission ineffectiveness have not panned out.

d) The Author’s Personal Experience. As the first woman assigned to my combat A-10 squadron in 1994, I realized there were some concerns about a woman’s integration into the unit. I knew that I needed to show my competency and capability. I performed very well in my combat ready checkout program and won a squadron bombing competition despite being the least experienced pilot in the squadron. I earned respect as a fighter pilot where performance is the ultimate, impersonal, gender-neutral standard. Within 60 days of my arrival in the squadron, we deployed to Kuwait for Operation SOUTHERN WATCH. Pilots were lodged in a separate area from the other troops. I worked with my commander to ensure I stayed in pilot lodging with my teammates. I lived in a trailer with four other male pilots (in my own small room) and we shared a small bathroom with a shower. We maintained appropriate boundaries and showed discretion to ensure privacy. During that deployment, my unit became a cohesive team based on our combat mission focus and my gender was simply not an issue.

Years later, when I took over command of that same squadron, I led a united, capable, and cohesive warfighting team. This cohesion was also strengthened as we deployed to combat in Afghanistan for five months. As a united team dedicated to the mission, the squadron was awarded the prestigious Air Force Association David C. Shilling Award for the best aerospace

⁹³ Those found to have made false accusations of sexual assault must also be punished in order to ensure no degradation to unit cohesion and effectiveness.

⁹⁴ Presidential Commission, p. 71.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 101.

contribution to national defense in 2005. I have personally experienced combat cohesion that was race, religion, and gender neutral.

So far, I have analyzed the issues of whether women “could” serve in ground combat and conclude that women should be assessed for assignment as individuals. Some women are capable and some women are not, just as some men are capable and some men are not.⁹⁶ Individuals should be evaluated for their capabilities and leadership should set the conditions for cohesion between qualified individuals on the team. Leadership must also discipline or remove those whose behavior or attitudes detract from the team and decrease unit effectiveness, regardless of their gender. Such arguments do not address the final bastion of those opposed to women in combat, however, who instead address the question of whether women “should” serve in combat.

Women Just Don’t “Belong” In Combat

Some critics’ fundamental argument against women in combat is centered on beliefs concerning the proper roles of men and women, where women must be the givers and protectors of life, not takers. Others believe that a man’s role is to protect and a woman’s role is to be protected. In the Presidential Commission’s Alternative Views section, Elaine Donnelly and others state: “Good men respect and defend women. Women should not be required, as the price of equality, to sacrifice this fundamental principle that governs a civilized order.”⁹⁷ As another

⁹⁶ As a final data point, Canada removed all gender restrictions in their military in 1989. According to the Canadian Forces Desk Officer for Gender Integration, women now make up 3.8 percent of the ground combat arm officers and 1.4 percent of combat arms enlisted force. Women constitute 9 percent of the deployed combat force in Afghanistan, including a female Master Corporal currently deployed as a rifle section second in command. Canada suffered its first female combat casualty in Afghanistan in 2006. The Captain was an armor officer. Canada has a gender-neutral performance standard for all of its positions. Total attrition rates for men and women in the last five years across the Canadian Forces were equal, at 6.2 percent. (email dated December 22, 2006 from Lieutenant Commander Gord AuCoin, Canadian Forces Desk Officer for Gender Integration.) For other examples of women in combat in other countries in history, see Appendix B.

⁹⁷ Presidential Commission, p. 61.

example, the Presbyterian Church of America published a report in 2001 that used biblical references to conclude that all men have the God-directed duty to protect women, the weaker gender, and therefore women should not serve in combat.⁹⁸ This report was signed by a former Air War College Commandant, Major General Bentley Rayburn (USAF, retired) in his capacity as a civilian.

This cultural philosophy has influenced our laws and policies throughout our history. The U.S. government first attempted to keep women from the risks of being engaged in war. When the clean line between combat and non-combat became blurred the government eventually accepted women being at risk in a combat zone, but just did not think it was right for them to be offensive combatants. The result is an emotion-charged line drawn between where women can serve in defensive positions and even fight when attacked, but they ought not be assigned to jobs with the role of seeking out and killing the enemy. Although this attitude was overcome in combat aviation, this is a fundamental defense for keeping the ground combat exclusion policy. Additionally, critics state that America is not ready to handle women in body bags or women POWs. Are these accurate statements about America's views of women in combat?

Polls: Polls of the American people indicate they have been split on the issue of women in combat, but even prior to Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, a substantial majority supported for women in combat roles. For example, in 1990, a CBS News/New York Times poll "asked 1,557 adults nation-wide whether women members of the armed forces should be allowed to serve in combat units if they want to. Seventy-two percent said women should be allowed to do so, while 26 percent said they should not."⁹⁹ The Presidential Commission hired the Roper Organization to conduct polls in 1992. When

⁹⁸ "Ad Interim Study Committee on Women in the Military," General Assembly Actions and Position Papers of the Presbyterian Church in America," <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/1-278.html>, (accessed 29 November 2006).

surveying 1,700 adult Americans, 45 percent stated that women should voluntarily be assigned to ground combat and 25 percent believed they should be required.¹⁰⁰ In 1997 *Time* magazine conducted a telephone poll and reported that “the majority of those polled, 67 percent, supported the statement that women should be allowed to serve in combat roles.”¹⁰¹ The Triangle Institute for Security Studies conducted a 1998-1999 Survey on the Military in the post-Cold War era. When asked if women should be allowed to serve in all combat jobs, 53 percent of 1,001 people in the general public and 57.5 percent of 909 civilian elites answered “yes.”¹⁰² Note that all of these polls were taken prior to women’s unprecedented contributions in ground combat in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM/IRAQI FREEDOM.

“*Body Bags*”: Since 9/11, 70 women have died in Iraq and Afghanistan, an unprecedented number of women combatant casualties. The American public is showing distaste for the number of total deaths, but there has been very little outrage directed specifically at the number of women casualties. We are at war and all of these losses are difficult to accept, but a woman’s life is not more valuable than the life of any man. Congresswoman Heather Wilson, the only female veteran in the U.S. House of Representatives, stated that the war in Iraq has settled the issue of whether the public will value the lives of fallen women soldiers over men. “There have been casualties, men and women, and we grieve for them. But I think we have gotten beyond the point where losing a daughter is somehow worse than losing a son.”¹⁰³

POWs: Critics of women in combat state that Americans are not ready to deal with women POWs and all the risks that go along with being captured. However, during World War II, 77

⁹⁹ Skaine, *Women at War*, p. 121.

¹⁰⁰ Georgia C. Sadler, CAPT, USN (ret), “Women in Combat, The Polling Data,” *Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1993, p. 52.

¹⁰¹ Susan J. Golding, “Women: Ready For the Challenges of the Future U.S. Armed Forces,” USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2002, p. 7.

¹⁰² Miller and Williams, p. 368.

American women were POWs in the Philippines, eight in Japan, and one in Europe.¹⁰⁴ Two female soldiers were taken prisoner in Operation DESERT STORM, as well as two additional female soldiers in the early days of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. From her one-woman think-tank called the Center for Military Readiness, Elaine Donnelly has put a lot of emphasis over the years on the risks of rape as a POW. Although the risk is there for women, it also exists for men, and both accept that risk as a part of their job. In either case, rape is a violation of the Geneva Convention. In the current war, male and female reporters, contractors, and civilians are also vulnerable to being kidnapped, tortured, raped, and executed. These are horrors of war with an enemy whose strategy ignores these conventions. All men and women in military positions more vulnerable for capture go through extensive training to prepare for this treacherous situation and must think through and accept the risks of potential horrors as a POW. And although the public is rightly outraged when any of our servicemen or women are captured, the lack of outrage to female POWs in particular undercuts this reason for excluding women from combat.

After analyzing the common arguments against women in combat, my conclusions are: 1) that some women have the physical strength and stamina to fight in ground combat and each recruit should be assessed individually; 2) women's mere presence in a unit is not a detriment to cohesion; and 3) the U.S. public seems supportive of qualified women serving in any roles that are qualified to fill. However, there are some issues and policies related to women in the military that have and will continue to impede our combat effectiveness and must be addressed seriously in order to ensure success of fully integrating female warriors into the combat arms.

¹⁰³ Moniz, David, "Female amputees make clear that all troops are on front lines", *USA Today*, 28 April 2005. http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-04-28-female-amputees-combat_x.htm (accessed 24 November 2006).

Chapter 5

Gender Issues/Policies That Effect Military Capability

Little public discussion focuses on less glamorous policies related to gender that directly impact the essential element of success in the battlespace--combat effectiveness. These policies, and the military ethos, must be changed to fully integrate women into our warfighting force. In my view, many of these policies are “holdovers” from our past when women were in more traditional cultural roles in society and in the military. They seek to paternalistically preserve elements of femininity that reduce training effectiveness, set roadblocks to gender integration, and inculcate double standards. The negative effects of these policies are used as fodder by critics of women’s integration into the military, and are misconstrued as being caused by the presence of women. In reality, these policies promulgate actual or perceived double standards for/against women that ultimately degrade the warfighting team. As a female who has both killed and survived as a fighter pilot in combat, I believe these policies and our ethos should be changed in order to increase the overall combat effectiveness of our armed forces.

Pregnancy

Military policies on pregnancy have evolved from being a reason for mandatory discharge to the current policy where pregnancy is considered a normal condition consistent with a military career. Current DoD policy still allows a pregnant woman to request a release from her

commitment to the military, subject to approval by the service.¹⁰⁵ Also, current DoD policy and ethos does not discourage pregnancy while in assignments that would remove the women from her primary duties for over a year (like a fighter pilot), or pregnancy during deployment vulnerability periods.¹⁰⁶ The reality of today's high tempo military with over 14 percent women is that a poorly timed pregnancy can have a significant effect on military effectiveness.¹⁰⁷

Harrell and Miller discovered this during their study on women's effect on readiness:

“We heard many times that *who* was pregnant and *when* she was pregnant made a tremendous difference to unit readiness. There was a general perception that women officers and senior enlisted personnel try to time their pregnancies to have the least effect upon the unit—e.g., not before a scheduled deployment. This was due, in part, to their pride in and concern regarding their units and also because, we were told, those women had invested a lot of time in their careers and would not want to damage them. These opinions stood in marked contrast to those concerning junior female personnel, especially single mothers. Single, pregnant, junior enlisted personnel were considered the most problematic because the pregnancies were less likely to be planned and more likely to create other problems, such as financial and child-care problems, that impacted the unit.”¹⁰⁸

The military is not like any other organization or company. Its purpose is the defense of the nation, so there must be a culture where military women understand it is not their right to get pregnant whenever they desire. Instead, they need to realize their duties take precedence. They must take measures to prevent unplanned pregnancies and plan pregnancies when in non-deployable situations. Expansion of women's roles in uniform, the shrinking of the force, and the high operations tempo—where every military position is vulnerable to deploy—has made

¹⁰⁵ The military services can deny the request due to needs of the military, however the author is aware of requests approved by the Air Force.

¹⁰⁶ The USAF assigns every position in an Air Expeditionary Force cycle of four months deployment vulnerability followed by 15 months recovery, routine training, and preparation for the next deployment. Some high demand specialties are on a higher tempo, but all the services are attempting to tell servicemen and women when they are scheduled to deploy next, barring unforeseen circumstances.

¹⁰⁷ DoD policy prohibits pregnant women from deploying overseas or participating in activities that would potentially be dangerous to the baby. Navy and Marine Corps policies state that pregnant women must be within six hours of a hospital. (Harrell and Miller, p. 39) For a fighter pilot flying in an ejection seat aircraft, a pregnant pilot is grounded immediately and unable to do their primary job for almost a full year. After not flying for 10+ months,

this even more crucial than in the past. Military leaders must create a climate where commanders are not afraid to talk about pregnancy as a readiness issue and counsel female warriors on their obligation to not plan to get pregnant when it will negatively impact unit readiness.¹⁰⁹ The issue is intent, which is difficult to enforce except through strong leadership, a call to dedication and integrity, and proper counseling to military women.

While pregnancy is a temporary condition, parenthood is a permanent one that affects both servicemen and women. Single parents and dual-military parents are obligated to have a plan for care of their children in event of deployment and many manage their duties and parenthood admirably. Servicewomen should not be allowed to get out of their service obligation just because they become pregnant.

Double Standards

Another dynamic that has proven to decrease cohesion in mixed-gender units is the appearance or reality of a double standard. If the military is truly to be a warfighting team with gender neutral standards, it needs to abolish any policies that appear to make things easier or different for women, including those that demean them. Harrell and Miller found that some “[l]eaders create resentment between men and women by holding them to a different standard or giving them assignments or recognition based on gender.”¹¹⁰ Although gender was not cited as a major factor in determining the morale of mixed-gender units, “to the extent gender affected morale, the perception of different standards or policies for men and women was a frequently

a pilot must go through a formal requalification training program in order to become combat ready. While grounded, the overall combat readiness of the squadron is diminished.

¹⁰⁸ Harrell and Miller, p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ The author realizes accidents may happen, and units should deal with them just like unplanned injuries and illnesses. There is a fine line to create an ethos that addresses this issue seriously, without encouraging women to have abortions or endanger the health of the baby over fear of implications.

¹¹⁰ Harrell and Miller, p. 63.

cited source of major problems.”¹¹¹ It is my view that these perceptions are born during the first phase of transition into military life—basic training—and are reinforced by other policies throughout their career.

Basic Training

When I entered the Air Force Academy, we went through gender-integrated basic training. Women simply needed to be in much better shape for their gender than the men, but it was challenging for all. As a senior, I was in charge of the hardest course in basic training, the Assault Course. We taught basic warfighting skills and it was physically exhausting for men and women. Gender-segregated basic training is not conducive to building an effective warfighting team and only plants the seed that women are inferior partners in uniform. Watered down gender-integrated training that caters to weak women diminishes the training experience for all. The military needs gender-integrated basic training that demands women recruits perform to a very high standard of fitness where both men and women are challenged.

When men enter basic training, the military shaves their head. This policy is intended to take away the person’s individuality and build him into a warrior who is a part of a team greater than himself. This head shaving procedure is a significant event on the first day of a young man’s transition to the military. When women enter basic training (for the Air Force), their hair is not even cut. Women are directed to style their hair in accordance with policies on personal appearance as they watch their male teammates get their heads shaved. This sets the tone of a double standard for both men and women to experience on their first day in uniform that impacts the way they treat each other for the rest of their time in service. Assuming the head shaving ritual is beneficial for the transition from a civilian to a warrior, this policy does not allow

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 80.

women to experience that same significant symbolic event on their journey to becoming a warrior. This double standard is indefensible and needs to be changed.¹¹² This issue was seriously (and emotionally) debated upon admitting women to Virginia Military Institute for the first time in history. The final decision was that women got a “short-sheared cut” of approximately one-inch long for the first six weeks of basic training and then be able to grow it out to a short style for the remaining six months of the first year. After that, they, like the male cadets, could grow it out further as long as they remained within regulations. This would be a reasonable alternative.

Uniforms

When women served in WWII, they initially wore the same uniform as men which caused some functional and practical obstacles for some women. Over time, the women’s uniform was modified substantially. In the 1950s and 1960s, a great amount of emphasis was put on ensuring that women looked “feminine,” even under grueling conditions in the combat zone. These attitudes impact the uniform women wear today. Currently in the Air Force, other than the battle dress uniform and flight suit, women’s uniforms have an entirely separate look than those of men. Women are allowed to wear skirts, pumps, and pantyhose when in their “blues.” Women have a light blue shirt that is allowed to be untucked from their blue pants. Women must wear a long skirt and heels when in formal dress uniform. The differences have become ridiculous at times: women’s cummerbunds on their formal uniform are worn with the pleats down, while men’s are directed to be worn with pleats up. Women have a different flight cap than men. Women’s belts face the opposite direction of men’s belts.

¹¹² Laura Fairchild Brodie, *Breaking Out, VMI and the Coming of Women*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 2000) p.131.

Most police and fire departments have moved away from gender specific uniform styles. The need for different sizes and cuts in order to better fit a woman's body and look professional is understandable, but any other differences in uniforms only accentuates our differences. It is called a "uniform" for a reason: it makes everyone look the same. I am not saying women have to be like men while in the military. However, when your line of work is the defense of the nation, there is no place for high heels, pantyhose, and skirts above the knee.

Double Standards that demean/patronize female warriors

If we are to treat all military members equally, the DoD must ensure it also eliminates double standard policies that are demeaning or patronizing towards women. This includes different standards based on the excuse of adhering to "cultural norms" or "host nation sensitivities." For example, I spent over seven years of my career trying to eliminate the policy that required U.S. servicewomen to wear the Muslim abaya (burqa) in Saudi Arabia. This policy, along with others that treated military women as second-class citizens, degraded the good order and discipline of the military by creating a double standard that was demeaning to women. It affected the way military men treated and viewed military women. In the end, Congress unanimously passed an amendment to the 2003 Defense Authorization Act that overturned the policy of a two-star general after the entire Department of Defense refused to rescind the policy. Other policies that hint of this same dynamic and effect should be identified and eliminated.

Selective Service Registration

From the birth of our nation, citizenship provided certain rights like voting, but those rights were connected to the obligations of paying taxes, jury duty, and military service if needed. Initially, the "inalienable rights" that we believed all men were created with actually only applied to white men who owned property. The connection between citizenship and service was a

fundamental argument for the abolishment of slavery after the Civil War, where advocates claimed that black Americans “bought their rights with blood.”¹¹³

Section 451 of the Military Selective Service Act (MSSA) of 1948 states: “The Congress declares that an adequate armed strength must be achieved and maintained to ensure the security of this nation. Congress further declares that *in a free society the obligations and privileges of serving in the armed forces and the reserve components thereof should be shared generally, in accordance with a system of selection which is fair and just*, and which is consistent with the maintenance of an economy.”¹¹⁴ When the male only registration was challenged in *Rostker v. Goldberg*, the U.S. Supreme Court decided to defer to Congress’ authority over the military. Since Congress failed to institute President Carter’s request to mandate men and women register for service, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the male only draft. Despite the fact that the MSSA never states the role of selective service is to specifically provide ground combat troops like the infantry, Congress decided in 1980 to a male only draft based on the philosophy that the purpose of a draft would primarily be to provide ground combat troops and women were excluded from combat.

If ground combat positions become open to women in an all-volunteer force, the next question is: “should women be forced to serve in ground combat if drafted?” In my view, men and women should serve in the position they are best qualified for in a draft as well, based on physical standards and other aptitude measurements. Citizens’ rights and responsibilities should be gender neutral.¹¹⁵ Some argue that droves of women will get pregnant to get out of the

¹¹³ Lorry M. Fenner, and Marie E. deYoung, *Women in Combat: Civic Duty or Military Liability?* (Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2001) p. 54.

¹¹⁴ http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title50a/50a_9_1.html

¹¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the issue of the draft as an obligation of citizenship for men and women, see *Women in Combat: Civic Duty or Military Liability*, Lorry M. Fenner and Marie E. deYoung. I realize I am in the minority in stating that women might be forced into ground combat if qualified in the future as an implication of the policy change. When 906 civilian elite and 710 military elite were asked if women should be required to serve in all

potential of serving on combat. The reality is that men unwilling to fight will also find loopholes and we need to deal with those issues during the execution phase.

Adjustments to the military ethos regarding pregnancy and double standards will enhance current and future integration of women warriors into the military warfighting team. This climate change, along with the policy and legislative recommendations below, will fully integrate women in a manner that maximizes military capability.

combat jobs, only 13.9 percent of the civilians and 12.7 percent of the military answered 'yes'. (Miller and Williams, "Do Military Policies on Gender and Sexuality Undermine Combat Effectiveness", p. 369).

Chapter 6

Policy and Legislative Recommendations

The collocation policy was intended to minimize the risk of combat to women in combat support positions, but the realities of current warfare have made this restriction obsolete. All it does is restrict assignment flexibility of the military services during a time of strained personnel tempo. The collocation policy has been overcome by events and should be immediately rescinded. Next, the military services should adopt a gender-neutral meritocratic approach for assigning all enlistees to specific positions. They should consider all potential servicemen and women as individuals, not groups of people divided by race, religion, or gender characterized by prejudicial stereotyped attributes. A gender-neutral, capabilities-based assignment system would provide maximum flexibility for military leadership during the planning and execution of combat operations. This approach is similar to that stated by the Honorable Edwin Dorn, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness as he testified before the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Military Forces and Personnel in 1994. He stated: "Readiness is enhanced when we remove unnecessary impediments to recruitment, training, and use of people. During the past year-and-a-half, the Department has made major progress in removing such impediments. As a result, some 260,000 more jobs in the military can now be filled by either men or women. This represents an increase in the flexibility that the Services need to maintain readiness. Altogether, about 80 percent of all jobs in the armed services and more than 90 percent of military career fields can now be filled by the best qualified and available person, man

or woman.”¹¹⁶ This logic should extend to the remaining career fields and positions. America must pick the best man for every military job—even if she is a woman. As women’s roles expand, the military must eliminate double standards to ensure maximum readiness, cohesion, and effectiveness. I recommend the following policy/law changes:

- 1) The Department of Defense should notify Congress that it is immediately rescinding the collocation rule, in order to align current policy with the realities of combat today and provide assignment flexibility to combat commanders.
- 2) The Department of Defense should notify Congress that it intends to rescind the ground combat exclusion policy, allowing all ground jobs to be open to any person who is qualified to fill those positions, regardless of gender.
- 3) The Department of Defense should rescind the policy that allows servicewomen to get out of their commitment to the military due to pregnancy. Double standards that favor or demean women must also be identified and eliminated.
- 4) Congress should amend the Military Selective Service Act to include women. This amendment will provide the widest pool of candidates to choose from for all military roles in the case of a national emergency and ensure American women participate in the most basic obligation of citizenship.

¹¹⁶ Statement of the Honorable Edwin Dorn, Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) as quoted in HASC Report No. 103-50, Hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, “Assignment of Army and Marine Corps Women Under the New Definition of Ground Combat,” 6 October 1994, p. 9.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The United States is engaged in a long-term global war on terrorism. To fight this war, America needs the most capable, flexible military force. Some think readiness and increased roles in the military for women are mutually exclusive objectives. On the contrary, the evidence indicates these objectives are mutually reinforcing. Policy that excludes 51 percent of the population from 20 percent of military positions is neither efficient nor wise in terms of fielding the most capable force. Like previous prohibitions against women flying combat aircraft or serving on combat vessels, the ground combat exclusion policy was shaped by traditional cultural views of women that have become obsolete.

There is added impetus to abandon the ground combat exclusion policy for similar obsolescence. Current warfare is not linear and combat is occurring in a 360-degree radius around all combat and combat support forces. Women are at risk of being injured, captured, or killed, and are displaying incredible skill and courage in combat situations. The Army is transforming to a modular fighting system where restrictions on assignment of women limit flexibility. The Army is also increasing its end strength and continues to lower standards to fill recruitment quotas. Given these realities, the military needs to recruit from 100 percent of the population for positions each is best qualified to fill.

Common arguments against women serving in ground combat are not sufficient to exclude all women from being considered for combat roles. Some women have the physical strength to fill

ground combat assignments, just as some men do not. Assessing recruits as individuals can provide the most capable and flexible fighting force. Women do not, by their presence, diminish cohesion in a warfighting unit. And the American public is willing to have women serve in any role in the military for which she qualifies.

Through 230 years of history and in many conflicts, American women have shown great courage in service to their country despite being restricted in their military roles. Incrementally, laws and policies opened more and more positions to women as they proved their capabilities and as cultural views evolved to accept women as warriors. The military is now at another historic crossroad. The ground combat exclusion policy is obsolete and the policy should be rescinded.

At the same time, a comprehensive reengineering of gender-related policy is essential to attain maximum combat effectiveness. Effectiveness is degraded when women and men are accessed, evaluated, inculcated, conditioned, trained, and assigned differently because of gender. In order to integrate men and women as equal warfighters on the most effective combat team, DoD needs to ditch some hold-over policies that were founded in the years when military women's roles were more traditional in nature. Double standards that either favor or demean women must be identified and eliminated. A modified ethos is necessary where men and women serve under equal expectations, respect, and accountability--where both women and men place service and ultimate victory first and demure the notion of disparate prerogatives based on gender norms.

"No women in combat" may be policy recently affirmed by the Commander in Chief, but it is not reality. Despite the exclusion, women have marched directly into direct fire. Fortunately, some American women have proven they indeed are capable of fighting in ground combat.

Going forward, America needs both men and women to serve where they are most qualified and needed with no limiting exclusions.

Appendix A: Positions Closed To Women as of 2005¹¹⁷

ARMY

Position, weapon system, and field of skills	Rationale for the applicability
Infantry	Direct ground combat primary mission
11A Infantry Officer	
11B Infantryman	
11C Indirect Fire Infantryman	
11Z Infantry Senior Sergeant	
Armor	Direct ground combat primary mission
12A/ B Armor Officer	
12C Cavalry Officer	
19D Cavalry Scout	
19K M1 Abrams Armor Crewman	
19Z Armor Senior Sergeant	
Special Forces	Direct ground combat primary mission
18A Special Forces Officer	
180A Special Forces Warrant Officer	
18B Special Forces Weapons Sergeant	
18C Special Forces Engineer Sergeant	
18D Special Forces Medical Sergeant	
18E Special Forces Communications Sergeant	
18F Special Forces Asst Operations & Intel Sergeant	
18Z Special Forces Senior Sergeant	
Ranger	Direct ground combat primary mission
Field Artillery	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
13B Cannon Crewmember	
13C Tactical Automated Fire Control Systems Specialist	
13D Field Artillery Automated Tactical Data Sys Specialist	
13E Cannon Fire Direction Specialist	
13F Fire Support Specialist	
13M Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Crewmember	
13P MLRS Operational Fire Direction Specialist	
13R Field Artillery Firefinder Radar Operator	

¹¹⁷ Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, "Annual Report on Status of Female Members of the Armed Forces of the United States, FY 2003-2005.

AIR FORCE

Position, weapon system, and field of skills	Rationale for the applicability
11SXA and 11SXB-- Special Ops Rotary Wing Pilot--restricted weapon systems MH-53 and MH-60 only	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
13DX - Control and Recovery (Includes suffixes A - Combat Rescue, and B - Special Tactics)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
15WX (restricted positions when serving with the Army) - Weather	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
11XXU and 12XXU - Pilot and Navigator Air Liaison Officer	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
1T2X1- Pararescue	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
1C2X1 - Combat Control	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
1C4X1 - Tactical Air Command And Control	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
1A1XB - Flt Engineer/Gunner MH-53, MH-60	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
1W0X1 - Weather	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
2E1X3 - Ground Radio Comm	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
3C1X1 - Radio Communications Systems	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units

MARINE CORPS

Position, weapon system, and field of skills	Rationale for the applicability
0302 a Infantry Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
0303 a light-Armored Vehicle Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
0306 a Infantry Weapons Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
0802 a Field Artillery Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
1802 a Tank Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
1803 a Assault Amphibian Vehicle Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
0840 a Naval Surface Fire Support Planner	Direct ground combat primary mission
0845 a Naval Gunfire Spotter	Direct ground combat primary mission
0803 a Target Acquisition Officer	Direct ground combat primary mission
0311 a Rifleman	Direct ground combat primary mission
0313 a LAV Crewman	Direct ground combat primary mission

NAVY

Position, weapon system, and field of skills	Rationale for the applicability
Special Warfare SEAL Officer and SEAL Enlisted	Direct ground combat primary mission
Enlisted Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians and Special Operations Officers who are integrated with Special Warfare/Special Forces Units	Direct ground combat primary mission
Special Warfare Combatant Craft Crewmember (includes Surface Warfare Officers assigned to Special Boat Units)	Direct ground combat primary mission
Special Operations Independent Duty Corpsman/Special Operations Technician Corpsman (SEAL Hospital Corpsman Navy Enlisted Code 8491/8492)	Direct ground combat primary mission
Support personnel assigned to Naval Special Warfare Development Group (Information Systems Technician, Electronics Technician, Construction Mechanic - positions are doctrinally required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units closed to women)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Support personnel assigned to Joint Communications Unit (Information Systems Technician, Electronics Technician - positions are doctrinally required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units closed to women)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Companies (ANGLICO) (Surface Warfare Officer)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Infantry Regiment and below (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Tank Battalion and below (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units

NAVY (continued)

Position, weapon system, and field of skills	Rationale for the applicability
Assault Amphibian Battalion and below (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist; Navy Enlisted Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians and Special Operations Officers when assigned)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Combat Assault Battalion, 3 rd Marine Division (MAR DIV) (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Force Reconnaissance Battalion, Marine Division (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Artillery Battalion and below (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Combat Engineer Battalion and below (Medical Corps Officer; Chaplain Corps Officer; Religious Program Specialist)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Special Amphibious Reconnaissance Independent Duty Corpsman (Hospital Corpsman)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Marine Force Reconnaissance Corpsman (Hospital Corpsman)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Medical Field Service Technician (Hospital Corpsman)	Collocation w/ direct ground combat units
Submarines (SSN, SSBN, SSGN, AGSS, NR-1)	Costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive
Patrol Coastal (PC) ships (due to inadequate berthing and privacy requirements as well as doctrinal requirement to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units closed to women)	Costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive

It is important to note that, regarding positions in the above units, the Navy skill field itself is not closed to women, only the performance of that skill field on the specific, closed platform.

Appendix B: Non-U.S. Examples of Women in Combat

This section is not intended to be a comprehensive review of women's roles in the military throughout history, but instead some examples of their participation in a variety of societies and conflicts in the modern era. This section is meant only to provide data points that, due to or in spite of cultural norms, women have demonstrated that they are capable of fighting fiercely in combat.

WWI. The participation of Russian women in all roles including combat in WWI was unprecedented. At first, women served in a variety of support roles, some disguised themselves as men to fight and some were accepted to serve as combatants without being forced to disguise their gender. "Command personnel frequently used high praise in describing their female soldiers. While men hesitated, women often volunteered for dangerous reconnaissance missions and in many instances were the first to rush from the trenches during attacks. Russia's women soldiers often proved more enthusiastic, better disciplined, more courageous, and more self-sacrificing than their male compatriots. Many were even awarded high military honors like the St. George Cross for their courage."¹¹⁸ By 1917, women were trained in separate all female units, both as an effort to use all resources against the Germans and Bolsheviks, and as an attempt to rally and shame the male troops into fighting. "That women could perform adequately in combat was demonstrated by the action of the 1st Russian Women's Battalion of Death on 9 July 1917. The battalion impressed senior male commanders and embarrassed German troops

¹¹⁸ Laurie Stoff, "They Fought For Russia: Female Soldiers of the First World War", in *A Soldier and A Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, edited by Gerald J. Degroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird, (Harlow, England, Pearson Education Limited, 2000) p. 69.

forced to surrender to them.”¹¹⁹ Russian women’s participation in WWI was a result of necessity as well as political/cultural philosophy of a social democracy that was emerging in Russia at the time, where equality and rights were granted to all. These rights also came with the fundamental obligation to defend the nation.

China: In 1934, the Chinese Communist Army began the famous “Long March”, a 10,000 kilometer retreat following blockade and attacks by Chiang Kai-Shek’s Nationalist Army.

“More than 2000 of the women who joined the Red Army in the 1920s and 1930s participated in the Long March.”¹²⁰ Little has been written about women’s participation in this treacherous journey that defined the first generation of Chinese Communists. Chinese culture consists of a mix of philosophies on women. Traditional Confucian beliefs held women in an inferior position to men in society. Mao Zedong, however, adopted a philosophy of the People’s War, where an oppressor can only be overthrown if the entire population (men and women) was mobilized behind the war effort. He successfully mobilized women in both the anti-Japanese war and the Chinese civil war.

WWII. In the modern era, WWII marked the most extensive participation of women throughout the ranks of several countries including the U.S., but the roles again demonstrated the tension between necessity and cultural norms. For example, Britain utilized mixed-gender anti-aircraft batteries, where women were trained in all positions but pulling the trigger. When Britain created the Home Guard, “men deemed unfit for regular military service (or those in reserved occupations) were being organized into local defence units because the threat of German invasion seemed real.”¹²¹ Therefore, elderly and sick men joined, but women were prohibited

¹¹⁹ Degroot and Peniston-Bird, *A Soldier and A Woman*, p. 5.

¹²⁰ Helen Praeger Young, “Women at Work: Chinese Soldiers on the Long March, 1934-1936” in *A Soldier and A Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, edited by Degroot and Peniston, p. 83.

¹²¹ Degroot and Peniston-Bird, *A Soldier and A Woman*, p. 5.

from exercising the most fundamental obligation of citizenship. This demonstrates a circumstance where cultural norms weighed stronger than maximizing all resources for national defense.

Russia is an example where national survival and defense took precedence. After the German invasion of Russia in 1942, women fought in startling numbers in Russia in all capacities in the air and on the ground. For example, Russia trained three regiments of pilots: The 586th regiment of fighter pilots, the 587th bomber pilots, and the famous 588th night bombers, “who proved so effective at hitting their targets that they were nicknamed by the Germans the night witches.”¹²² According to Soviet records, these women flew “a combined total of more than 30,000 combat sorties, produced at least 29 Heroes of the Soviet Union (of the 33 female aviators and 93 total women who received that medal) and included in their ranks at least three fighter aces.”¹²³ Russian women also fought extensively in ground combat.

Germany showed the most conservative philosophy towards the role of women in the military and combat. Hitler believed “Nazi women were to guarantee the survival of the Aryan race in the labor room, not on the battlefield.”¹²⁴ Nonetheless, women increasingly served in combat support in greater numbers (over 450,000) as the war progressed. Like Britain, Germany trained and utilized women in antiaircraft and searchlight positions with the same success, but they were also prohibited from actually firing the AA guns. In February 1945, Hitler directed the creation of an experimental woman’s infantry battalion, but the war ended before they could be trained and employed.¹²⁵

¹²² Campbell, “Women in Combat: WWII” p. 319.

¹²³ Reina Pennington, “‘Do Not Speak of the Services You Rendered’: Women Veterans of Aviation in the Soviet Union,” in Degroot and Peniston-Bird, *A Soldier and A Woman*, p. 153.

¹²⁴ Campbell, pp. 313-314.

¹²⁵ As quoted in Campbell, pp. 317-318.

Vietnam. Mao Zedong's People's War philosophy was passed on to the Vietminh when China was providing advice to them in their struggle against their French rulers in the 1950s. Chinese General Chen Geng was the senior military advisor to the Vietminh. Upon appointment to this role, he analyzed the readiness and ability of the Vietminh to defeat the French. In his diary, he wrote that "he discovered that the Vietminh neglected the mobilization of women in its struggle against the French. Since women constituted more than half of the Vietnamese population, Chen believed that ignoring them meant wasting more than half of the human resources. He pointed this out to Vietminh leaders."¹²⁶

Although many women joined the resistance in the French-Indochina War, they were fully mobilized by Ho Chi Minh in the American war in Vietnam. Women served in a variety of roles during the war motivated by a great sense of patriotism and a call to defend their homeland. Many remained as guardians of their villages through service in the militia and anti-aircraft defense while continuing to work in the production of agriculture and industry. "Over 60,000 educated women worked as engineers, reporters, doctors, and communications operators on the Ho Chi Minh trail and the Southern battlefields. The largest number entered the Army through the volunteer youth corps."¹²⁷ They endured brutal field conditions and demonstrated the ability to fight and lead in battle.

Israel. Since the creation of the Israeli Defense Force in 1948, both women and men have been conscripted, but women are now obligated to serve for two years vice three for the men.

Contrary to popular myths, women have served primarily in support roles in the Israeli military

¹²⁶ Qiang Zhai, "Transplanting the Chinese Model: Chinese Military Advisors and the First Vietnam War, 1950-1954," *Journal of Military History*, Vol 57, No. 4., (October, 1993), p. 699.

¹²⁷ Karen Turner, "Soldiers and Symbols: North Vietnamese Women and the American War," in Degroot and Peniston-Bird, *A Soldier and A Woman*, p. 193.

in past conflicts with neighboring countries except the 1948 war for independence. The first female combat pilot earned her wings in 2001, and as of 2005, women were admitted into combat positions of artillery, frontier guards, and on Navy ships.

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